

Preparing deportation law, France targets imam Hassan Iquioussen

Samuel Tissot
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On Friday, a judge in an administrative tribunal suspended the French government's emergency expulsion order against imam and ex-school teacher Hassan Iquioussen. Iquioussen was born in Dadian in Northern France and has lived here for 58 years. He faces expulsion to Morocco, where he has never lived and has publicly criticized the King.

Iquioussen has five children and nine grandchildren who all reside in France and are citizens. His father forced him and his siblings to refuse their right to French citizenship at 18. He has since unsuccessfully attempted to claim citizenship twice, once in 1984, and once in 1990. He has previously taught French language at high school level.

On October 31 last year, Iquioussen's house was raided and searched by gendarmes, who found nothing incriminating. Earlier this year, the Nord prefecture refused to renew Iquioussen's residence permit, alleging that he gave "hateful speeches against the values of the Republic, including secularism," denied "equality between women and men," and developed "anti-Semitic" and "conspiracy theories about Islamophobia."

On May 3, the Macron government began an expulsion procedure against him. Then on July 28, interior minister and ancient member of the Royalist *Action Française*, Gerald Darmanin told the National Assembly that Iquioussen "will be expelled." After Moroccan authorities confirmed they would accept the imam, on August 1 Darmanin stated that Iquioussen will be "expelled *manu militari* [by force] from the national territory."

Iquioussen has denied all these allegations. Lucie Simon, the imam's lawyer, stated, "He strongly and seriously contests each of the elements contained in the expulsion order, which are not only old but also taken

out of context, truncated by cut sentences and often unverifiable."

Yesterday morning, it seemed the government's campaign would be successful: the European Court of Human Rights, to which Iquioussen's lawyers had also appealed, refused to intervene in the French government's emergency expulsion of the imam.

However, Darmanin's plan was halted later on Friday morning, when a judge in the Paris administrative tribunal suspended the government's expulsion order, at least temporarily. This judgment was then rapidly appealed by Darmanin, who repeated allegations of anti-Semitism, sexism, and religious extremism in a tweeted statement on Friday afternoon.

According to journalist Camille Polloni, who has seen the text of the judge's order, the judge ruled against the government because there was no evidence to support the state's accusations of anti-Semitism or religious extremism against Iquioussen. The judge agreed with the imam's lawyers that every quote except one attributed to him by the government were taken out of context and did not amount to a "provocation to hatred."

The only comment the judge found did contravene this standard was a remark inviting women to stay in the home. However, the judge concluded that this did not "justify the expulsion order."

Darmanin has very publicly pursued Iquioussen in the context of a renewed offensive against immigrants by the Macron government. The government had planned to introduce a new draconian immigration law targeting basic democratic rights this week but has now delayed the examination of legislation until the end of August. This action was ostensibly to facilitate "debate."

The bill proposes to eliminate immigrants' right to appeal expulsion, the sole legal means by which

Iquioussen has been able—for the time being—to remain in France. It also proposes the removal of exemptions to deportations, for example marriage to a French citizen or arrival in France before 13 years of age. In an interview with *Le Figaro* on August 3, Darmanin said he is “ready to imagine additional quotas for each profession or sector under tension [from a lack of available labor].”

The real reason the bill has been delayed is not for debate, but in order for Darmanin and the Macron government to conduct a highly publicized anti-immigrant campaign to prepare public opinion for a wide-ranging attack on immigrant rights.

Marion Ogier, a lawyer from the Human Rights League, noted that Darmanin’s pursuit of the imam sought to “create a media echo to promote his immigration bill” by announcing the imam’s expulsion “publicly, on social networks, even before notifying him.”

The pursuit of Iquioussen is only one facet of this criminal campaign. Since late July, Darmanin has led a foul campaign against the population of the La Guillotière district of Lyon, where on July 20 an altercation between three plain clothes police officers and around 20 individuals took place.

The officers were in pursuit of a man they accused of petty theft in the district. Seeing three people in pursuit of a man, members of the local population intervened to protect the fleeing man, which led to fighting between the police and locals. This incident, in which no one was seriously injured, was then hysterically seized on by the pro-Macron and far-right press as a “lynching,” though no one was killed during the event.

Darmanin travelled to Lyon, where he told residents of the need to strength measures to expel “foreign criminals.” Darmanin also seized on the incident to drastically increase the number of police officers in the city, sending 70 more cops into the district to “retake control.”

In his interview with *Le Figaro*, Darmanin blamed immigration, not widespread poverty and distress amongst the poorest sections of French society, for crime, “Today, foreigners represent 7 percent of the French population and commit 19 percent of acts of delinquency. To refuse to see this would be to deny reality.” On August 4, on CNews he stated: “If [immigrants] do not respect our values and our laws,

they must leave. Common sense.”

What is unfolding is a draconian attack on fundamental democratic rights by a government that is inciting far-right sentiments. The state sought to remove a French-born resident, who hasn’t been charged, let alone convicted of a crime, due to his alleged disaccord with the French state’s “values.” Only the imam’s successful appeal against the order, a right the government is seeking to overturn, has temporarily prevented his expulsion.

The Iquioussen case and Darmanin’s anti-immigrant campaign shows how, emboldened by his April victory, Macron and his allies are seeking to deepen and extend the French state’s anti-Muslim campaign. In all its essentials, this is the same fascistic policy proposed by the Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally (RN).

Macron’s law is going to a National Assembly crammed with deputies of his own party, of the RN and of Jean Luc Mélenchon’s New Popular Union, which has supported previous anti-Muslim legislation. There is clearly an enormous danger that immigrants’ right to appeal deportation will be eliminated.

In the case of Iquioussen, despite the judge’s verdict he remains at huge risk of deportation to Morocco in the coming days and week. Embarrassed by the ruling against its highly publicized pursuit of the imam, the Macron government will do everything in its power to overturn the ruling.

The Macron government’s new campaign confirms the correctness of the SEP France’s call for a boycott of the second round of the French presidential election. Contrary to the claim that Macron was a “Republican” alternative to Le Pen, Macron himself is implementing a far-right program based on incitement of racism, to rapidly build up a police state. The defense of millions of Muslims and immigrants in France requires a massive political mobilization of the working class.



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